



RAINDROP TALES GPM MEETS MIZU-CHAN

When is it going to rain? How much will it rain? We ask these questions every day to know if we need to wear rain boots or bring an umbrella. We also ask these questions to help us make decisions about bigger issues concerning safety, transportation and our jobs. But have you wondered how scientists measure rain and snow? In this story, you will learn how these measurements are made worldwide with satellites and why they are important. Follow along as a satellite, GPM, begins to observe the world of precipitation and meets some new friends along the way.

View Digital Comic:



pmm.nasa.gov/education/comics



Acknowledgements



Global Precipitation Measurement Mission

pmm.nasa.gov
www.nasa.gov/gpm

Precipitation Education

pmm.nasa.gov/education

Supplemental Resources for this Comic Book

pmm.nasa.gov/education/comics

Artist (pencils, inks, color, lettering)

Aja Moore

Original GPM and Mizu-chan Character Artists

Yuki Kiriga, Sabrynne Buchholz

Script

Kristen Weaver, Ellen Gray

Supplemental Page Design, Web Design, Editor

Jacob Reed

Editors / Advisors

Dalia Kirschbaum, Dorian Janney, Kasha Patel

NOTE: IN THE STORY, THE SATELLITES HAVE CHARACTERS TO REPRESENT THEM. HOWEVER, THE REAL SATELLITES ARE REMOTELY OPERATED AND DO NOT HAVE PEOPLE ABOARD.

IN HIS FIRST DAYS IN ORBIT, THE GLOBAL PRECIPITATION MEASUREMENT CORE OBSERVATORY (AKA GPM) SHOULD HAVE FELT LIKE HE HAD IT ALL.



YEARS IN THE MAKING, HE WAS A STATE OF THE ART SATELLITE, THE BEST OF TWO SPACE AGENCIES*. HE WAS ON TOP OF THE WORLD.

*NASA AND JAXA

CAN I OPEN MY EYES NOW?



INSTEAD, GPM WAS IMPATIENT.

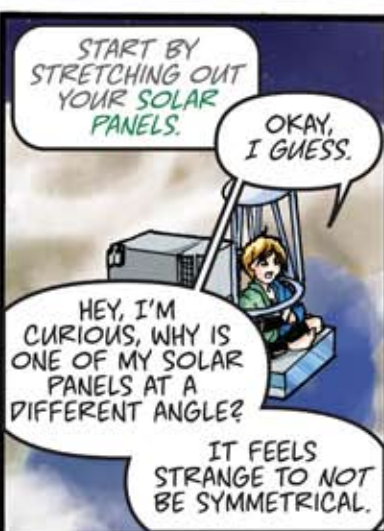
BE PATIENT, GPM. WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE NOTHING BROKE DURING LAUNCH.



REMEMBER, WE CAN'T SEND ANYONE TO FIX YOUR HARDWARE NOW THAT YOU'RE UP IN SPACE.

START BY STRETCHING OUT YOUR SOLAR PANELS.

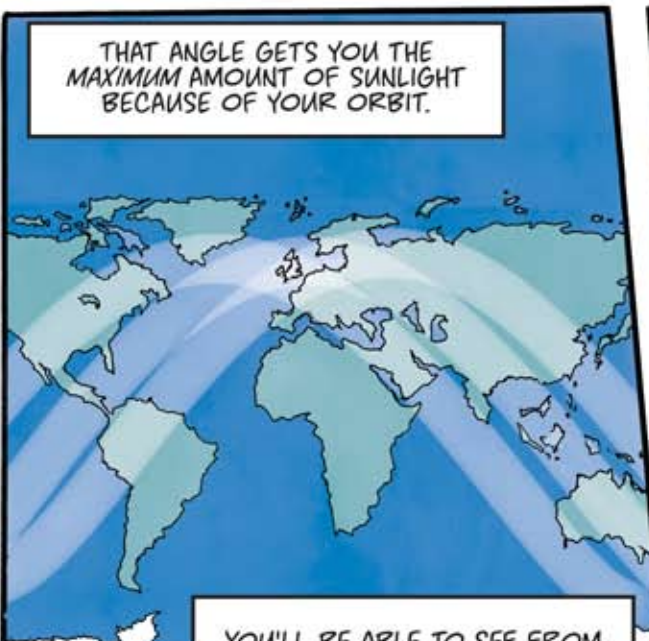
OKAY, I GUESS.



HEY, I'M CURIOUS, WHY IS ONE OF MY SOLAR PANELS AT A DIFFERENT ANGLE?

IT FEELS STRANGE TO NOT BE SYMMETRICAL.

THAT ANGLE GETS YOU THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF SUNLIGHT BECAUSE OF YOUR ORBIT.



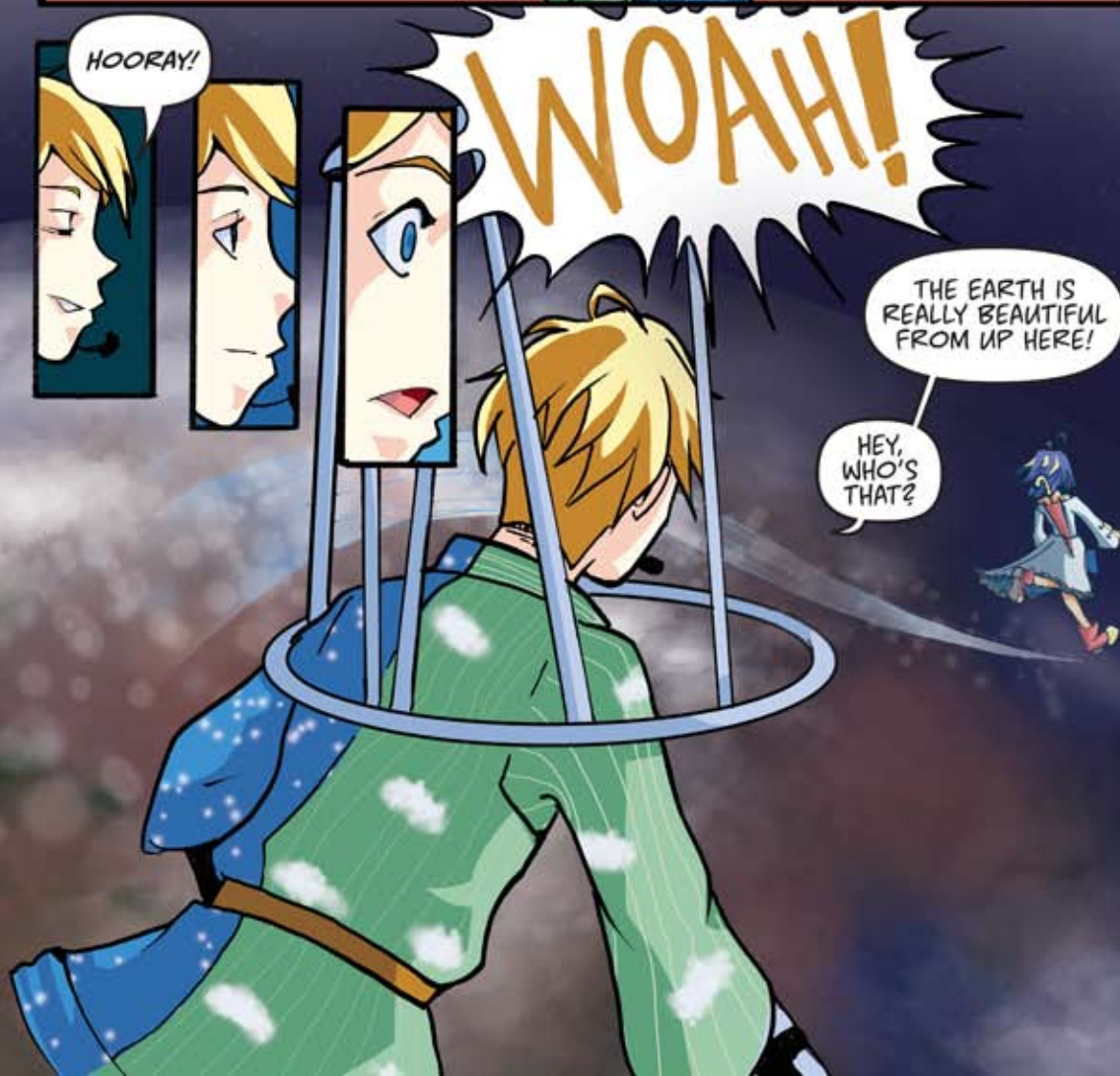
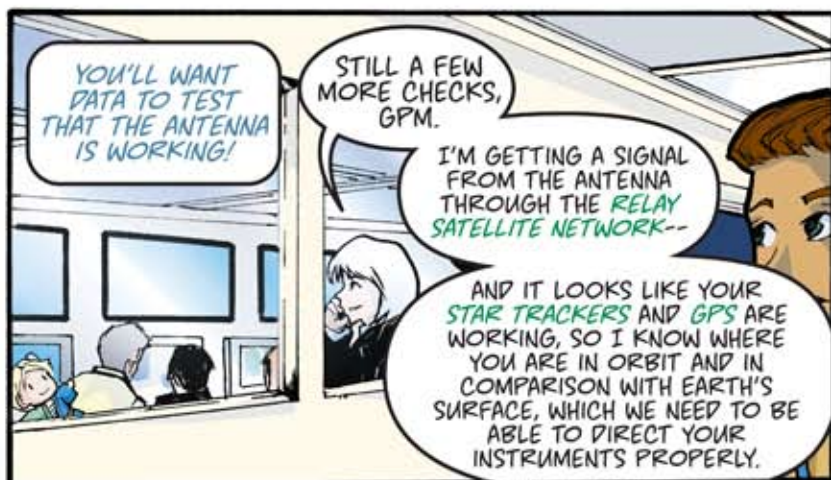
YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SEE FROM BETWEEN THE ARCTIC CIRCLE AND THE ANTARCTIC CIRCLE.

OH, I SUPPOSE THAT MAKES SENSE.

I'M STARTING TO FEEL THE SUNLIGHT ON MY SOLAR PANELS, CHARGING UP MY BATTERIES.



GREAT. YOU'LL NEED THAT ELECTRICAL ENERGY TO POWER YOUR INSTRUMENTS.





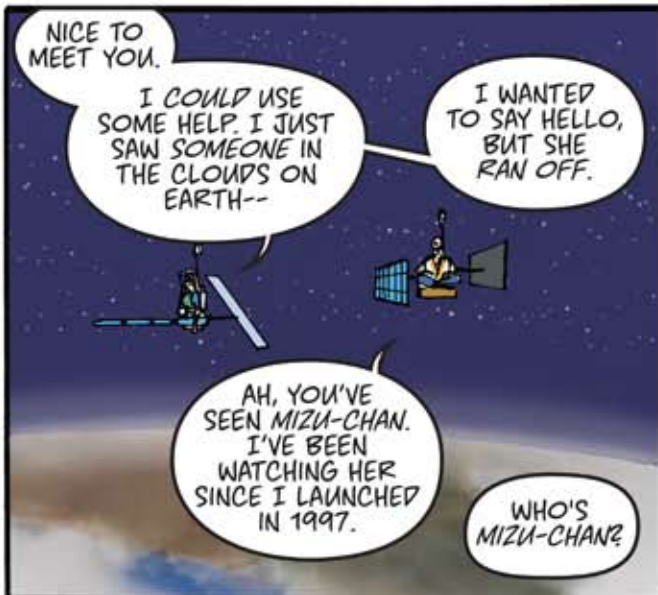


WHO ARE YOU?

I'M TRMM*, AND I'M A PRECIPITATION MEASUREMENT SATELLITE TOO.

YOUR PREDECESSOR, IN FACT.

*TROPICAL RAINFALL MEASURING MISSION



NICE TO MEET YOU.

I COULD USE SOME HELP. I JUST SAW SOMEONE IN THE CLOUDS ON EARTH--

I WANTED TO SAY HELLO, BUT SHE RAN OFF.

AH, YOU'VE SEEN MIZU-CHAN. I'VE BEEN WATCHING HER SINCE I LAUNCHED IN 1997.

WHO'S MIZU-CHAN?

SHE'S THE PERSONIFICATION OF RAIN, SNOW AND ALL ITS COMBINATIONS.

YOU'LL SEE HER MOOD CHANGE DEPENDING ON THE CONDITIONS IN THE ATMOSPHERE.

MY INSTRUMENTS AREN'T SOPHISTICATED ENOUGH TO SEE--

BUT I'M TOLD THAT AT HIGHER LATITUDES SHE EVEN MAKES SNOW.

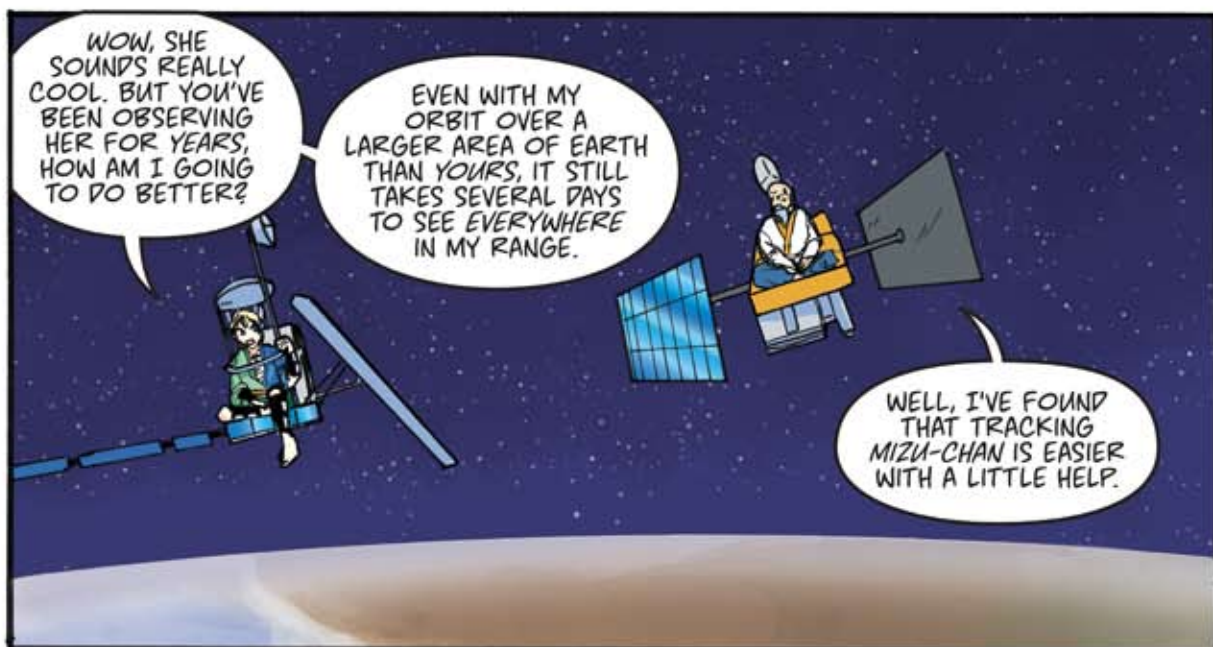


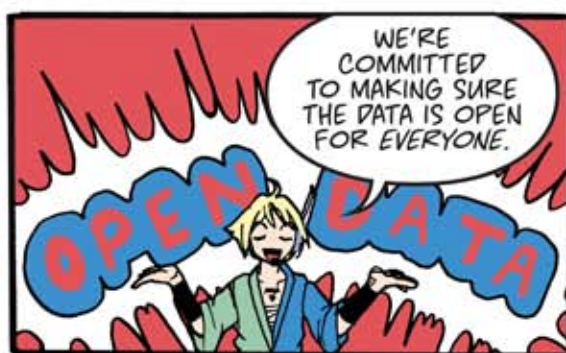
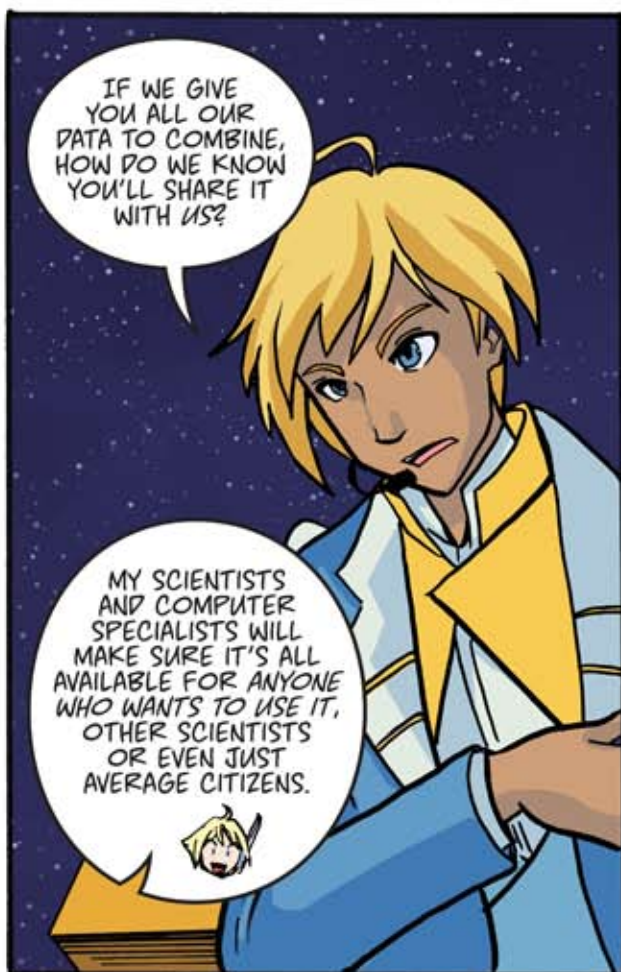
SOMETIMES THERE WILL BE ONLY LIGHT RAIN, BARELY A DRIZZLE

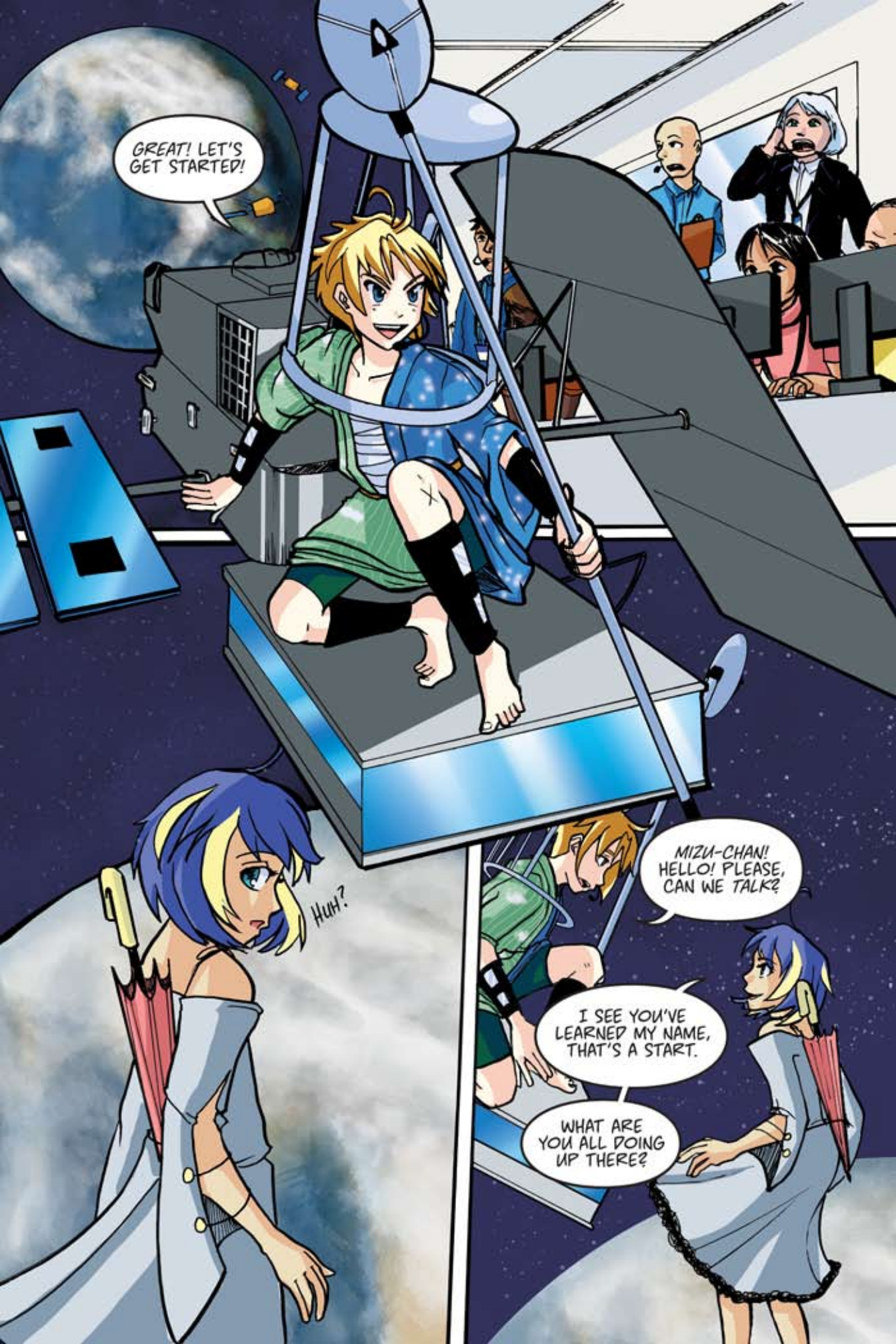
OTHER TIMES, POWERFUL STORMS AND HEAVY RAINS.



I'VE ALWAYS FOUND HER THE MOST MESMERIZING AND TERRIFYING WHEN SHE FORMS A HURRICANE







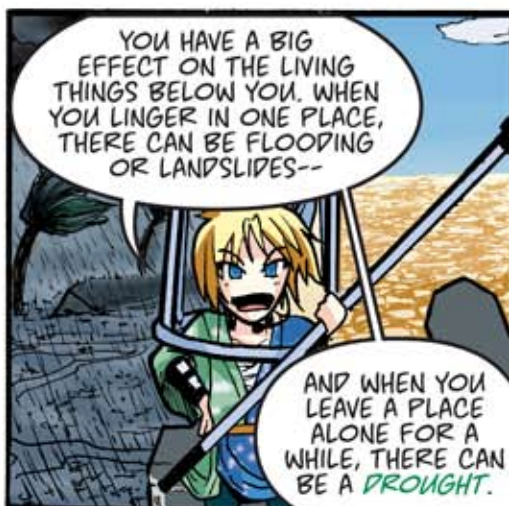
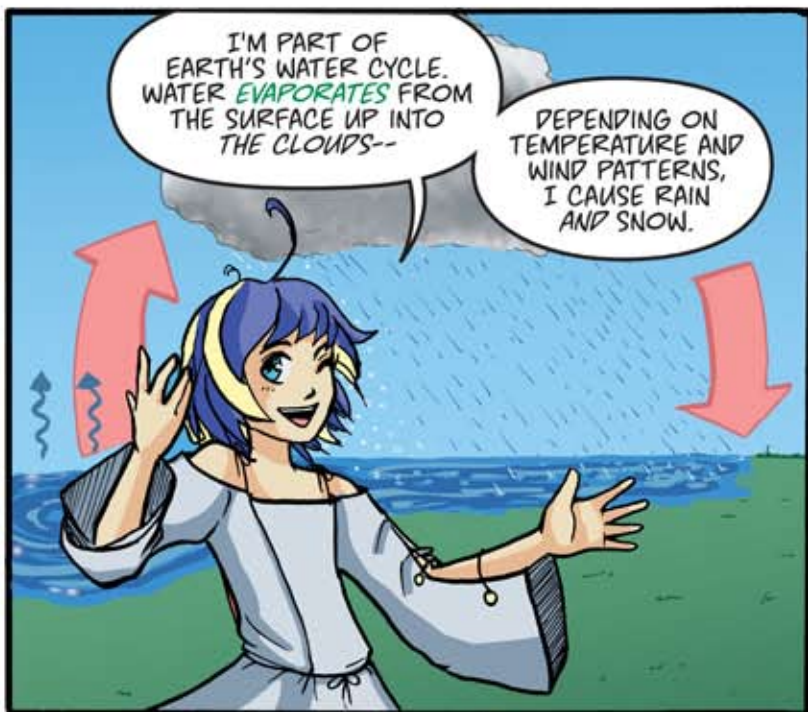
GREAT! LET'S GET STARTED!

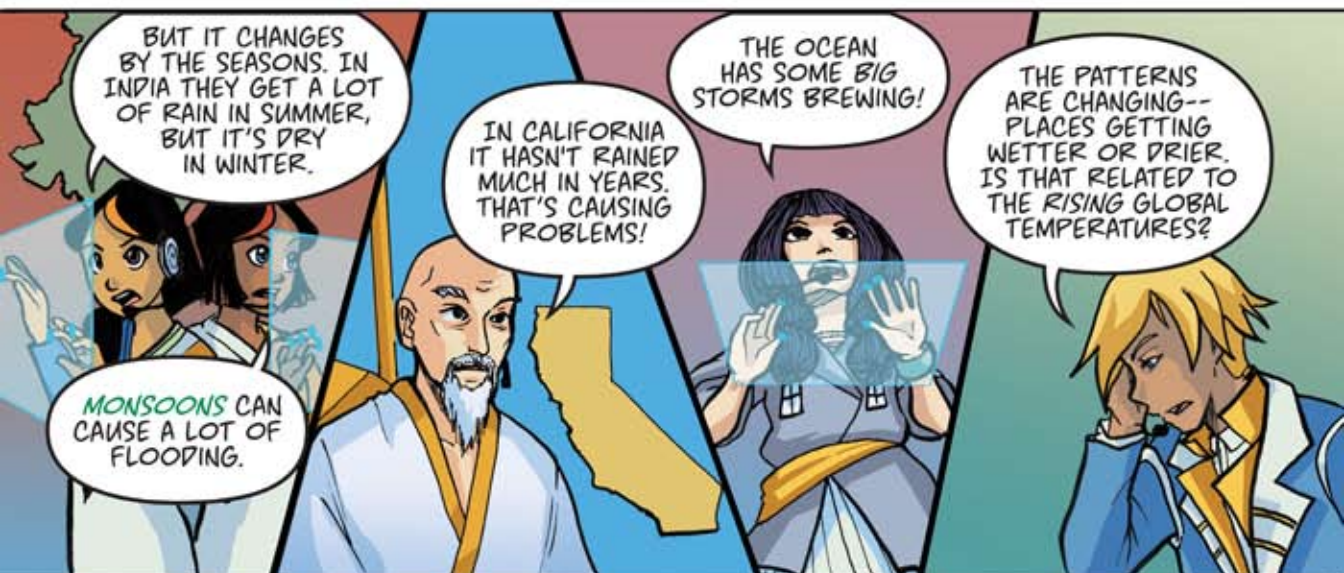
Huh?

MIZU-CHAN! HELLO! PLEASE, CAN WE TALK?

I SEE YOU'VE LEARNED MY NAME, THAT'S A START.

WHAT ARE YOU ALL DOING UP THERE?





A comic book panel set in space. Two characters are on a platform. The character in the foreground has blue hair with yellow streaks, wears a grey jacket, green shorts, and red-and-white striped socks. They are holding a closed red umbrella. Behind them, a character with blonde hair is partially visible. To the left is a grey control console with various buttons and a circular antenna on a pole. The background shows the Earth's horizon and a starry sky.

I GUESS
WE'LL HAVE TO FIND
OUT TOGETHER!

Glossary

Antenna

A device used to transmit signals. GPM uses its antenna to send data and get instructions from the ground.

Calibrate

To measure and adjust readings in comparison to a set standard. The GPM Core Observatory is the calibration standard for the other satellites in the constellation to be able to combine all the data together.

Constellation

In this case, the group of international satellites that combine their data to get a global view of precipitation.

Drought

Long periods of low precipitation.

Evaporation

The process by which water molecules in liquid water are heated and escape into the air as water vapor.

Flooding

The submerging or covering of land under water.

Frequency

The number of cycles (up and down) per second of a wave of electromagnetic energy as it moves. GPM measures thirteen different frequencies, each sensitive to different types of precipitation.

GPS - Global Positioning System

A satellite network used to provide information about the position and velocity of an object.

Hurricane

A tropical storm that has winds of 119 kilometers (74 miles) per hour or higher; the scientific term is "tropical cyclone".

Instrument

A tool used to make specific measurements to answer a scientific question.

Landslide

The sliding down of a mass of earth or rock from a mountain, cliff or other slope.



Background Image:
Grant Petty

Glossary

Microwave Imager

A GPM science instrument designed to sense the total precipitation within all cloud layers, including light rain, heavy rain and snowfall.

Monsoon

A seasonally reversing wind pattern that brings heavy rains during certain times of the year.

Orbit

The path followed by an object revolving around another object.

Precipitation

Any product of the condensation of atmospheric water vapor that falls quickly out of a cloud. The main forms of precipitation include drizzle, rain, sleet, snow, graupel and hail.

Precipitation Radar

A GPM science instrument that provides detailed three-dimensional measurements of particles of rain and snow, including information about their size, shape and location in the cloud layers.

Relay Satellite Network

The Tracking and Data Relay Satellite System (TDRSS) is a group of communications satellites and ground stations used by NASA for space communications.

Satellite

Anything that orbits or circles something else. Human-made satellites are artificial machines that are put in space in order to collect information or for communication.

Solar Panel

A panel that absorbs the sun's rays to create electricity. In the case of GPM, this energy powers the scientific instruments.

Star Trackers

Devices that measure the positions of stars and use a catalog of star locations to help the satellite know where it is in space.

Swath

The area of Earth observed by a satellite as it revolves around the planet.

Measuring Rain:

On the Ground and From Space

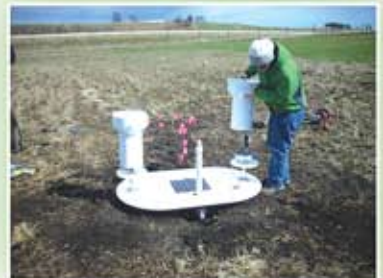
When is it going to rain? How much will it rain? We want to know about precipitation to plan day-to-day events, but also to help us make decisions about bigger issues related to safety, transportation and our jobs. Precipitation also significantly affects our food and water supply.

Therefore, it is important to accurately measure rain and snowfall.



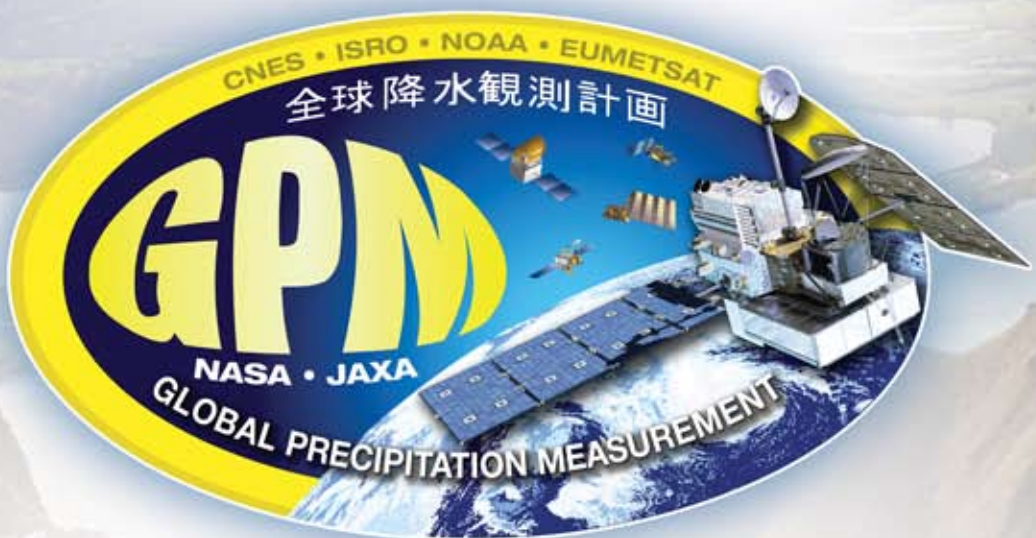
A simple rain gauge. Credit: CoCoRaHS

There are many ways to measure precipitation. Rain gauges collect and measure rainfall in a location over a period of time. However, rain gauges only measure rain in one specific spot. Radars can be set up on land and cover more area. From Earth, radar sends out a signal to the sky and measures how much of the signal is scattered by rain or snow. However, radars are only available in certain locations and do not measure rain over most of the oceans.



More complex scientific rain gauges. Credit: Iowa Flood Center

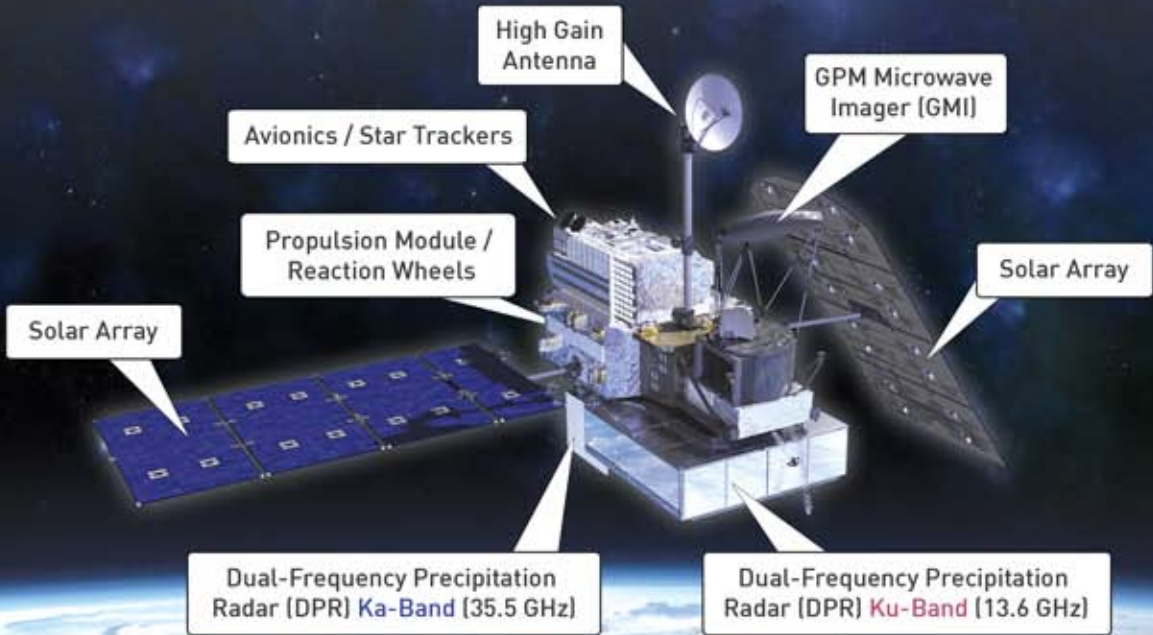
For a truly global picture of precipitation - over land, oceans and in all parts of the world - we use satellites in the sky.



The **Global Precipitation Measurement** mission (GPM) is an international network of satellites that are all looking down on Earth and measuring precipitation from space. The GPM concept centers on the deployment of the **GPM Core Observatory**, a satellite that helps measure precipitation all over the world every three hours. Not only will this data give us a better picture of global precipitation, it will help advance our understanding of Earth's water and energy cycle and improve forecasting of extreme events like floods, droughts, landslides and hurricanes.

The GPM Core Observatory

The GPM Core Observatory carries two instruments that measure precipitation from space. The data from these two instruments serves as a reference standard to unify precipitation measurements made by an international network of partner satellites. The design and sampling technique of the Core Observatory builds on the concept of the Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission (TRMM), which was launched in 1997 and continued collecting data until 2015.



The two main instruments on the Core Observatory are the **Dual-Frequency Precipitation Radar (DPR)** and the **GPM Microwave Imager (GMI)**. The DPR provides three-dimensional information about precipitation particles in the different layers of clouds. It sends energy at two frequencies (Ku- and Ka-band) into the cloud and observes the energy that is reflected from different heights. It is an active radar instrument since it actually sends out energy. The GMI is a passive radiometer – it just observes and measures energy that is emitted by precipitation within clouds. Different types of precipitation, like heavy rain and light snow, emit different frequencies of energy. The GMI measures these frequencies to tell us what kind of precipitation is in the cloud. Other components of the satellite include the solar panels to provide power, a high gain data-relay antenna for communication, a star-field finder for navigation and a control system to manage the satellite.



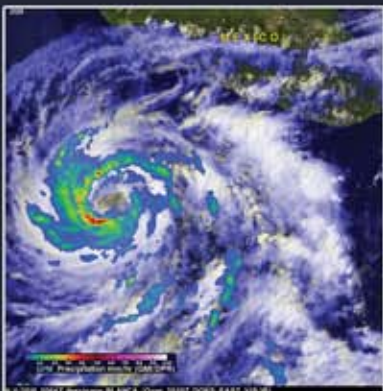
GPM Microwave Imager (GMI)
is a passive radiometer with a reflector above to receive the microwave energy reflected from precipitation.

The Dual-Frequency Precipitation Radar (DPR) is the two boxes on the bottom of the Core Observatory – the small one is the Ka frequency radar and the larger flat box is the Ku frequency radar

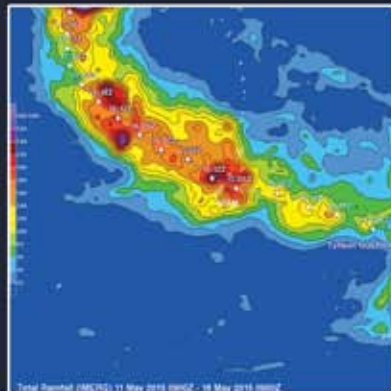


The GPM mission is co-led by **NASA** and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (**JAXA**). The GPM Core Observatory launched from the Tanegashima Space Center on Tanegashima Island, Japan in February 2014.

Global Precipitation Data

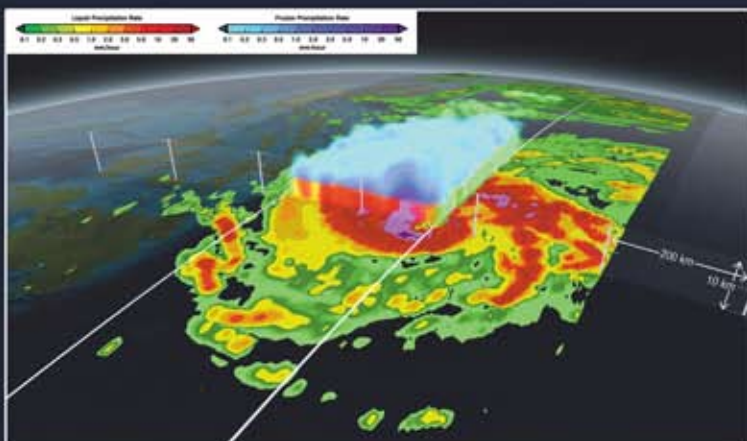


The GPM Microwave Imager (GMI) can generate 2D images of the rainfall and snowfall rates within storms, similar to an x-ray. This data can then be combined with other satellite data and used to calculate the total precipitation that fell over a period of time.



Rainfall rates (mm/hour) from Hurricane Blanca on June 4th, 2014 are shown overlaid on top of a GOES satellite image of visible clouds. The red areas have the highest rainfall rate, while the blue areas are the lowest for the storm.

Rainfall totals (in mm) from Typhoon Dolphin were calculated using GPM IMERG data from May 11th - 18th, 2015. The areas of highest total rain are red/pink, while lower accumulation is in blue.



GPM's Dual-Frequency Precipitation Radar (DPR) can provide 3D images of the intensity of precipitation within storms, similar to a CAT scan. This image shows precipitation within Typhoon Hagupit on December 5th, 2014. You can see a layer of frozen precipitation in blue above the melting layer, shown in red and pink.



Data from all the satellites in the GPM Constellation is combined to create a global image of precipitation known as **IMERG** (Integrated Multi-satellite Retrievals for GPM) which scientists use to study the global water cycle.



pmm.nasa.gov/data-access

About the Characters

GPM

Designed by Japanese comic writer and illustrator **Yuki Kiriga**, the design for the GPM character was selected as one of the winners of the GPM Anime Challenge, a character creation contest held in 2013. His blond hair and kimono (with snow and rain patterns drawn on it to represent the rain and snow he observes) show that he is half American and half Japanese, just like the real satellite.



TRMM

The Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission was launched in 1997 to study rainfall for weather and climate research. After 17 years of productive data gathering, the instruments on TRMM were turned off in April 2015, and the spacecraft re-entered Earth's atmosphere. In addition to a microwave imager, TRMM carried the first precipitation radar into space, a legacy GPM continues with its improved instruments. The character of TRMM is depicted as an older man, imparting his wisdom to the next generation GPM satellite.



Mizu-Chan

From the Japanese word for water, Mizu-chan is the personification of water and precipitation. Designed by then 14-year-old **Sabrynnne Buchholz** of Hudson, Colorado, USA, Mizu-chan was selected as one of the winners of the GPM Anime Challenge, a character creation contest held in 2013. As explained by her creator, her flowing dress in many shades of blue signifies the many forms of water found on Earth, although it can change color to be gray during storms, or white in the winter. Her hemline is surrounded by clouds, showing water vapor condensing as part of the water cycle. Depending on her "mood" (which correlates to temperature, pressure and other atmospheric conditions on Earth), the clouds will also form different types of precipitation – rain, sleet or snow. During storms, her hair may be tousled by the wind or strands may stand out straight to look like lightning bolts. She wears boots to avoid getting her feet wet from run-off, although they may also be covered by frost when the conditions are cold.



The Engineer

The Engineer is based on GPM Deputy Project Manager Candice Carlisle, who works at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, USA. Prior to working on GPM, she worked on the Space Technology 5 project as well as the Earth Science Data and Information System. Candace holds a B.S. in Computer Science and Physics from the College of William and Mary and M.S. degrees in Technical Management and Computer Science from Johns Hopkins University.



NOTE: IN THE STORY, THE SATELLITES HAVE CHARACTERS TO REPRESENT THEM. HOWEVER, THE REAL SATELLITES ARE REMOTELY OPERATED AND DO NOT HAVE PEOPLE ABOARD.

Background Image: Jessi Fife

The GPM Constellation

GCOM-W

The Global Change Observation Mission - Water (GCOM-W) was launched by the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency on May 18, 2012 from the Tanegashima Space Center on Tanegashima Island, Japan. GCOM-W observes global water and energy circulation using an Advanced Microwave Scanning Radiometer 2 instrument, the world's largest revolving space antenna at time of launch. GCOM-W is one of two satellites in the GCOM mission, along with GCOM-C, which observes climate change with an emphasis on the carbon cycle. The GCOM-W satellite is also known as "Shizuku," and the character in the comic reflects that Japanese heritage.



Megha-Tropiques

Megha-Tropiques was launched on October 12, 2011 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, India. A joint mission between the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and the Centre National D'Études Spatiales (CNES), the French government space agency, Megha-Tropiques studies the water cycle and energy exchanges in the tropics. This satellite holds a microwave imager that observes precipitation and cloud properties, a six channel microwave radiometer that observes water vapor distribution, and a radiometer that measures outgoing radiative fluxes. Because of the joint nature of the Megha-Tropiques mission between ISRO and CNES, two characters were used to represent the satellite.

MetOp

The Meteorological Operational Satellite Program is a series of three meteorological satellites developed jointly by the European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites and the European Space Agency (ESA). MetOp-A and MetOp-B were launched in 2006 and 2012, respectively, both from Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, and MetOp-C is scheduled to be launched in 2017. These satellites provide global weather data services and improve weather forecasting. The MetOp satellites carry 13 different instruments and sensors, supplied by both American and European agencies. Many of the instruments measure similar aspects of climate and weather, but use different measuring techniques to develop more accurate models. Although only one character was used to represent the satellite, ESA is an international organization with 22 member states and centers all over Europe.

